



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Note: Audio comments from U.S. Attorney Todd Graves are available in MP3 format, and may be downloaded from the district's Web site at www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow

PENNSYLVANIA MAN INDICTED FOR ATTEMPTED KIDNAPING, ENTICING NORTHWEST MISSOURI GIRL

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that a Pennsylvania man has been indicted by a federal grand jury for attempting to kidnap a 14-year-old northwest Missouri girl whom he had enticed over the Internet to meet for illicit sexual activity.

Jeffrey Stephen Thomas, 36, of Philadelphia, Penn., was charged in a four-count indictment returned under seal by a federal grand jury in Kansas City on July 20, 2005. That indictment was unsealed and made public today after the arrest of **Thomas**, who is being transported to Missouri to appear in U.S. District Court in Kansas City. An initial appearance has not yet been scheduled.

Count One of the federal indictment alleges that, from Sept. 4, 2003, to April 16, 2005, **Thomas** attempted to lure the girl through false statements and deceit to transport her from Missouri to Pennsylvania for the purpose of engaging in illicit sexual conduct.

According to a motion for pretrial detention filed this afternoon, **Thomas** has extensively worked for the past 18 months to lure the northwest Missouri girl to leave Missouri to travel with him back to his home in Pennsylvania for further illicit sexual conduct.

According to today's detention motion, **Thomas** met the 14-year-old girl online in a Yahoo! chatroom and began communicating with her via private instant messaging. When she told **Thomas** that she was unhappy with her home life, the motion says, he offered to help her disappear by coming to live with him in Pennsylvania, despite knowing that she is a minor. Over

the next 18 months, via online instant messaging and the telephone, **Thomas** allegedly promised to give her a wedding ceremony, a new large house, a new SUV, children, dogs, travel and vacations if the girl would leave her home. **Thomas** allegedly promised a better life if she would leave Missouri with him without telling her family where she went or who she went with. During the course of those conversations, says the detention motion, **Thomas'** discussions of sexual contact elevated from intercourse to plans of bondage, sadistic and masochistic sexual experiences they would engage in.

On Friday, April 15, 2005, **Thomas** arrived in northwest Missouri and made contact with the victim. Afterward, the motion says, **Thomas** told the victim that he was worried that he had not covered his tracks well enough for her to disappear yet; he needed more time to plan her disappearance, but would return for her later.

After returning to Pennsylvania, **Thomas** allegedly continued to contact the victim via telephone, including discussions of a sexual nature and of his plan to take her back to Pennsylvania.

Count Two of the federal indictment alleges that **Thomas** used the Internet and telephone to persuade and entice the girl to engage in sexual activity for which he could be charged with statutory rape and statutory sodomy under Missouri statutes.

Count Three of the federal indictment alleges that **Thomas** traveled across state lines for the purpose of engaging in illicit sexual conduct with another person on April 14 and 15, 2005.

Count Four of the federal indictment is a forfeiture count, which would require **Thomas** to forfeit to the government any property used in the commission of the alleged offense in Count Three, including a 1994 Chevrolet Blazer.

Today's detention motion argues that **Thomas** is both a flight risk and an active threat to the safety of the community, and requests the court to detain him without bail.

Graves cautioned that the charges contained in the indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Cynthia L. Phillips. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Nodaway County, Mo., Sheriff's Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow